

1 WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

2 1. A process for preventing food-borne illness comprising the step of heating a surface of a food  
3 product in a manner effective for achieving at least a 3 log reduction in live bacteria on said surface  
4 without causing any substantial color change in said surface.

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6 2. The process of claim 1 wherein said food product has an internal core temperature and  
7 wherein said step of heating is conducted in a manner such that no substantial increase in said  
8 internal core temperature occurs.

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10 3. The process of claim 2 wherein said internal core temperature is not greater than 40°F.

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12 4. The process of claim 1 wherein, in said step of heating, said surface is heated to a  
13 temperature of at least 160°F.

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15 5. The process of claim 1 wherein, in said step of heating, said food product is continuously  
16 delivered through an oven.

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18 6. The process of claim 5 wherein said oven is an infrared oven.

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20 7. The process of claim 1 wherein said food product has been cooked prior to said step of  
21 heating.

1 8. The process of claim 7 wherein said food product is selected from the group consisting of  
2 meat, poultry, and fish products.

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4 9. The process of claim 1 further comprising the step of packaging said food product within less  
5 than 10 minutes after said step of heating.

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7 10. A process for preventing food-borne illness comprising the step of heating a surface of a food  
8 product to a temperature of at least 160°F, said food product having an internal core temperature and  
9 said step of heating being conducted in a manner such that no substantial increase in said core  
10 temperature occurs.

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12 11. The process of claim 10 wherein said step of heating is conducted in a manner effective for  
13 preventing any substantial change in color of said surface.

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15 12. The process of claim 10 wherein said core temperature is not greater than 40°F.

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17 13. The process of claim 10 wherein, in said step of heating, said food product is continuously  
18 delivered through an oven.

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20 14. The process of claim 13 wherein said oven is an infrared oven.

1 15. The process of claim 10 wherein said food product has been cooked prior to said step of  
2 heating.

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4 16. The process of claim 15 wherein said food product is selected from the group consisting of  
5 meat, poultry, and fish products.

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7 17. The process of claim 10 further comprising the step of packaging said food product within  
8 less than 10 minutes after said step of heating.

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10 18. A process for preventing food-borne illness comprising the steps of:

11 (a) continuously conveying a precooked food product through a continuous infrared  
12 oven at an operating temperature of at least 500°F and

13 (b) heating a surface of said precooked food product in said infrared oven for a time  
14 sufficient to bring said surface to a temperature of at least 160°F,

15 wherein said precooked food product is selected from the group consisting of meat, poultry,  
16 and fish products.

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18 19. The process of claim 18 wherein said operating temperature is at least 700°F and said time  
19 is less than two minutes.

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21 20. The process of claim 18 wherein said operating temperature is at least 750°F and said time  
22 is less than one minute.

1      21.      The process of claim 18 wherein, in step (b), said surface is heated to at least 180°F.

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3      22.      The process of claim 18 further comprising the step of (c) continuously packaging said food  
4      product within less than 10 minutes after step (b).

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THESE ARE THE CLAIMS